

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SCI-06 AEC-11 DRC-01 EB-11 IGA-02 AID-20 /153 W

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R 250457Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0627

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2295

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, SN

SUBJ: SINGAPORE REACTION TO INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION

SUMMARY: GOS CONSIDERS INDIA'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSION A TUPID MOVE BUT PLANS NO OFFICIAL COMMENT. LOCAL PRESS COMMENTS THAT INDIA IS PUTTING CART BEFORE HORSE BY WASTING HUGE SUMS ON NUCLEAR PROJECT WHILE ECONOMY IN DESPERATE STRAITS. PRESS ALSO EXPRESSES ANXIETY THAT OTHER COUNTRIES MAY FOLLOW SUIT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT INDIA HAD EXPLODED ITS FIRST NUCLEAR DEVICE WAS RECEIVED WITH MIXTURE OF CRITICISM AND SKEPTICISM BY SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT AND PRESS. IN A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR MAY 24, MFA PERMANENT SECRETARY BOGAARS CHARACTERIZED INDIA'S ACTION AS VERY STUPID GIVEN THE WRETCHED CONDITION OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY. HE DID NOT THINK THE AVERAGE INDIAN WOULD BE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED. HE SAID PRIME MINISTER HAD LAUGHED WHEN HE HEARD ABOUT IT AND SAID IT WAS A "CRAZY" THING FOR THE INDIANS TO HAVE DONE. BOGAARS SAID GOS WOULD NOT ISSUE ANY STATEMENT AND NOTED THAT OFFICIAL GOS COMMENT WOULD BE POINTLESS. BOGAARS SPECULATED THAT THE MOTIVATION FOR INDIA'S ACTION

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MIGHT BE TO IMPRESS PAKISTAN. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT

INDIA'S DECISION TO EXPLODE A NUCLEAR DEVICE FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS. THE CURRENT WORLD POLITICAL SITUATION REPRESENTED A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME WHICH MADE INDIA'S ACTION SEEM TOTALLY INAPPROPRIATE.

2. EDITORIAL IN MAY 22 NANYANG SIANG PAU MADE THE SAME POINT. "THAT INDIA DEEMS IT PROPER TO EXPLODE A NUCLEAR DEVICE AT A TIME OF EASING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IS INDEED BEYOND THE DEN OF OTHER COUNTRIES." NANYANG COMMENTED THAT INDIA'S WASTING HUGE SUMS FOR PRODUCTION OF A NUCLEAR DEVICE "ASTOUNDS THE WHOLE WORLD." EDITORIAL CAUTIONED THAT "THERE IS INDEED GROUND FOR ANXIETY" THAT OTHER COUNTRIES MAY FOLLOW SUIT.

3. MAY 25 STRAITS TIMES COMMENTED THAT " IN BECOMING THE FIRST AID RECEIPT TO JOIN THE NUCLEAR CLUB, NEW DELHI SEEMS TO BE PUTTING THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE." COMMENTING ON INDIA'S STATEMENT THAT THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO PRODUCE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, MAY 22 STRAITS TIMES COMMENTED "MOST OBSERVERS WILL TAKE INDIA AT ITS WORD." HOWEVER, "SKEPTICS, REMEMBERING LIBERATION OF GOA (1961) AND EAST PAKISTAN WAR (1972) MAY WONDER."
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